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AUTHOR Frusher, Susan; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This study examined differences and similarities between male and female patterns of adult development by comparing equivalent male and female subject groups with regard to psychological well-being, locus of control, and job satisfaction. Subjects were 74 male and 81 female elementary and secondary school teachers who were either between the ages of 22 and 31 years or the ages of 42 and 51 years. All subjects completed the Affective Balance Scale, the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, the Job Satisfaction Index, and a demographic questionnaire. A 2 x 2 between subjects multivariate analysis of variance was performed on the three dependent variables associated with gender and age. The results revealed that the variables of psychological well-being, locus of control, and job satisfaction were all significantly related to the main effect of both gender and age, and to the interaction between gender and age. Middle-aged subjects were less satisfied with their jobs and were more externally controlled than were younger subjects; middle-aged women were found to be the least satisfied with their jobs. Female subjects also showed lower psychological well-being and a more external locus of control than did male subjects, suggesting that women have different developmental patterns than do men. (NB)

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The Relationship Between Gender and Psychological Well-Being, Locus of Control and Job Satisfaction during Early and Middle Adulthood

Susan Frusher

Department of Education

Northeastern State University

Joseph Pearl and Katye Perry

Applied Behavioral Studies

Oklahoma State University

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The Relationship Between Gender and Psychological Well-Being, Locus of Control and Job Satisfaction during Early and Middle Adulthood

Most current models of adult development are based primarily on observation of male subjects and, for the most part, life cycle theorists have implicitly adopted the male developmental pattern as normative (Notman, 1980). When women's development has not matched the male normative pattern it has often been conceptualized as deviant or deficient (Barnett & Baruch, 1978; Notman, 1980; Gilligan & Notman, 1978). Recently, however, some researchers have suggested that women may characteristically follow a developmental path which, though different than that which characterizes men's development, is equally legitimate (Baruch, Barnett & Rivers, 1983; Notman, 1980).

For example, during early and middle adulthood members of both genders might be concerned with marriage, children and career potentials, but a woman's development, more than a man's, is likely to be dominated by concerns related to the family life cycle whereas a man's development, more than a woman's, is likely to be dominated by concerns related to career progress (McIlroy, 1984). But to take the characteristically male pattern as normative and describe the characteristically female pattern as, for example, one of deficiency in

independence and ambition seems arbitrary. (One might just as well take the characteristically female pattern as normative and describe the characteristically male pattern as one of deficiency in the capacity to form close and satisfying emotional relationships).

Most research on patterns of adult development has used only male subjects (e.g., Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977; Tamir, 1982) though some has used female subjects (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Baruch et al.,1983) and some has used subjects of both genders (e.g., Gould, 1978; Sheehy, 1976). Likewise, the most influential theories of adult development have been proposed by males (e.g., Jung, 1961; Erikson, 1963; Vaillant, 1977; Levinson, 1978; Gould, 1978) though a few women have written on the topic (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Friedan, 1963; Baruch et al., 1983; Sheehy, 1976; Neugarten, 1976).

As a basis for theories of adult development that avoid gender bias research is needed to establish the possible existence of different (but perhaps equally healthy) patterns of male and female development. Such research must examine developmental patterns in equivalent male and female samples.

The present study seeks to add to our knowledge of differences and similarities between male and female patterns of adult development by comparing equivalent male and female subject groups with regard to three variables which have been prominent in research using predominately male samples: psychological well-being (e.g., Bradburn, 1969); locus of control (e.g., Levenson, 1974; Levinson,

1978; Gould, 1978), and job satisfaction (e.g., Tamir, 1982; Lowenthal, 1975; Levinson, 1978) at two different stages of adulthood that have been emphasized by the currently most influential theories of adult development (e.g., Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978; Gould, 1978; Baruch, 1983): early adulthood (22-31 years of age) and middle adulthood (42-51 years of age).

Method

Subjects

The sample for this study was randomly selected from elementary, middle and high school teachers who were listed in the personnel directory of a southwest metropolitan school district. Listing in the directory is optional. Approximately 84% of the district's 2521 teachers are listed. Using a proportional cluster sampling technique, which accounted for level of school, 300 teachers were selected and mailed the research instruments. Two hundred and fifteen (72%) responded. Of these 215, 155 fell into the needed age categories. From the 155, four groups were formed by age and gender. Thirty-seven (37) males and 27 females comprised the 22-31 age group, while 37 males and 54 females comprised the 42-51 age group. Therefore, a total of 74 males and 81 females served as subjects for this study.

Instruments

Psychological Well-Being

The Affective Balance Scale (ABS) (Bradburn, 1969) was selected to assess psychological well-being. The ABS presents subjects with a list of ten experiences, judged relevant to psychological well-being, five presumed to be positive in affect and five negative, and asks about each whether or not the subject has had that experience during the past few weeks. The score is simply the number of positive afect items experienced plus the number of negative affect items not experienced.

Locus of Control

The Internal-External Locus of Control Scales (Levenson, 1974) was used to assess subjects' belief that they themselves (as opposed to powerful others) controlled the events of their lives. It presents subjects with 16 statesments concerning their beliefs about the sources of control over the events of their lives (eight reflecting themselves as the source and eight powerful others) and asks them to respond on a Likert-type scale according to the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each statement, resulting in a total locus of control scores from 0 (external) to 48 (internal).

Job Satisfaction

The Job Satisfaction Index (Brayfield, Wells & Strate, 1957) presents subjects with 18 statements reflecting feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with one's present job. Subjects are asked

to respond on a Likert-type scale according to the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each statement, resulting in a score from 18 (most dissatisfied) to 90 (most satisfied).

Procedure

A packet containing a cover letter, the three research instruments, a demographic questionnaire and a stamped, addressed envelope were mailed to 300 subjects. The subjects were informed that since all the information would be reported by group rather than by individuals, no one would be identified by their individual responses and that confidentiality was assured. They were also offered a summary of the findings upon completion of the study if they desired it. A follow-up postcard was mailed to all subjects who had not returned the instruments after two weeks.

Results

A 2 x 2 between subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the three dependent variables: job satissfaction, locus of control and psychological well-being associated with gender (male and female) and age (22 to 31 and 42 to 51). Analysis was performed through SPSS MANOVA, with the sequential method which adjusts for unequal sample sizes and requests an orthogonal decomposition of the sums of squares. The order of entry of the independent variables was gender, age and age by gender. Results of the tests of assumptions of normality, homogeneity of

variance-covariance materials, linerity, and multicollinerity were satisfactory.

As determined by Wilks' criterion and supported by Pillai's criterion, the combined dependent variables were significantly affected by age, $F(3,149) = 10.98$, $p<.001$; gender $F(3,149) = 8.58$, $p<.001$, and the interaction between gender and age, $F(3, 149) = 2.71$, $p<.047$. See Table 1. The strength of association between the independent and combined dependent variables, measured by $1-\lambda$, indicated that the amount of variation shared by the dependent variables and gender, age, and the interaction between gender and age was 14, 18 and 5% respectively.

Insert Table 1 about here

In order to determine the effect of the interaction and each main effect on the individual dependent variables, the Roy-Bargman Stepdown F was performed on the basis of an a priori ordering of the importance of the dependent variables. The results of these analyses showed that of the three dependent variables, job satisfaction was the only significant variable that contributed to the interaction between gender and age, $F(1,151) = 6.70$, $p<.05$, resulting in 5% of the statistical variance that is associated between these variables, (see Table 2). Following Tukey's a posteriori comparisons between the cell means and the dependent variable, job satisfaction, it was found that

young adult males (M= 40.11) and young adult females (M=39.89) were significantly more satisfied with their jobs than middle-aged females (M=33.67). (See Table 3).

Insert Table 2 about here

Insert Table 3 about here

Results from further analyses as shown in Table 1, indicated a statistically significant relationship between the combined dependent variable and gender, $F(3,149)=8.58$, $p<.001$. Roy-Bargman's stepdown F tests, as presented in Table 2, revealed that, in order of priority, job satisfaction contributed most $F(1,151)=18.15$, $p<.001$, followed by locus of control $F(1,150)=6.41$, $p<.05$ to the prediction of differences between males and females. The results of the analyses, as shown in Table 2, were also supported by a significant univariate F test $F(1,15)=15.692$, $p<.05$ in that overall, males appeared to be more satisfied with their jobs (M=39.09) than females (M=28.66). Overall, males apeared to be more internally controlled (M=73.03) than females (M=65.90) See Table 3. A statistically significant univariate comparison $F(1,151)=5.08$, $p<.05$, as shown in Tables 2 and 3 revealed that in terms of psychological well-being, as measured by the Affective Balance Scale, males appeared to have a higher level

(M=8.64) than females (M=7.63). However, the contribution of this latter variable, as presented in Table 2 regarding the stepdown Fs, was not found to be a significant contributor for predicting gender after measures of job satisfaction and locus of control had been entered in the analyses.

As shown in Table 1, a unique contribution to predicting differences between young and middle-aged adults was made by the combined dependent variables $F(3,149)=10.89$, $p<.001$. The results of the Roy-Bargman Stepdown Fs shown in Table 2 revealed that in order of priority, job satisfaction made the greatest contribution $F(1,151)=23.97$, $p<.001$, followed by locus of control $F(1,150)=73.69$, $p<.05$ to the prediction of differences between the two age groups. The dependent variable of psychological well-being, as measured by the Affective Balance Scale, was not found to be significant when ordered among the prioritized dependent variables $F(1,149)=3.18$, $p>.05$. The strength of association between the dependent vafiables of job satisfaction and locus of control as indexed by $1-\lambda$ was .18, indicated that 18% of the variance associated with these dependent variables could be attributed to age differences.

Examination of the univariate Fs as shown in Table 2 support the stepdown analyses in that statistically significant differences were found between the mean scores of the young and middle-aged adults for job satisfaction $F(1,151)=25.55$, $p<.001$ and locus of control $F(1,151)=18.37$, $p<.001$. Therefore, following an examination of Table

3, young adults appeared to be more satisfied with their jobs ($\underline{M}$=39.998) than middle-aged adults ($\underline{M}$=35.873), while young adults appeared to be more internally controlled ($\underline{M}$=72.76) than middle-aged adults ($\underline{M}$=66.23). No significant difference was found between young and middle-aged adults' psychological well-being for the two age groups $\underline{F}(1,151)=2.83$, $\underline{p}>.05$. (See Table 2.)

Discussion

This research investigated the relationship between gender and the variables psychological well-being, locus of control and job satisfaction in early and middle adulthood. The results showed that the variables psychological well-being, locus of control and job satisfaction were significantly related to the main effect of both gender, age and the interaction between gender and age.

Job satisfaction was the variable where a significant difference occurred. Middle-aged women were the least satisfied with their jobs. Gould's (1978) work supports the theory that a middle-aged female may be caught in the traditional role of women's development--that of primarily wife and mother. Doering et al. (1983) and Kelleher (1973) also suggest a gender and age difference in job satisfaction. A working middle-aged woman may be in a job, such as teaching, that satisfied the nuturing aspect of her personality instead of a lifelong career of choice. Perhaps teaching was the middle-aged woman's choice because it was convenient for a working wife and mother. Also, 20

years ago women were not encouraged, nor perhaps allowed, to go into "men's" careers such as medicine, research, and law.

Another reason for lower job satisfaction in middle-aged women could be salaries. Salaries have been linked to job satisfaction (Doering et al., 1983). The geographic area the sample was taken from is among lowest 10 in the nation's 50 states for teachers' salaries. If teaching were chosen as a convenient career, the middle-aged woman may now resent her low salary. Recent social changes that have allowed young women to freely choose any career may account for the lower job satisfaction in middle-aged women.

This study also supports the findings that women have lower psychological well-being (Friedan, 1963; Melamed, 1983) and are more externally controlled (Notman, 1980; Baruch et al., 1983) than men. Previous adult developmental research used male subjects, consequently, many developmental theorists adopted the male pattern as the norm and viewed any women's development that deviated from men's as maladjusted (Spence & Helmreich, 1978; Gilligan, 1982). This study supports the assertion that women have different, developmental patterns than men (Gilligan, 1982; Sheehey, 1978; Melamed, 1983).

A reason for women's lowered psychological well-being may be that a sense of mastery or internal control is important to well-being. If the woman is not highly internally controlled, she may express a lower psychological well-being than men.

This study also indicated that middle-aged adults were less satisfied with their jobs and were more externally controlled than younger adults. Researchers have found age to be a critical factor when measuring job satisfaction, particularly in males (Erikson, 1963; Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1978). Many middle-aged males review their career successes and compare them with their "dream" of early adulthood (Levinson, 1978). Many times the middle-aged male may feel disillusioned or dissatisfied with his career accomplishments (Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1978). Thus he would exhibit lower job satisfaction than the young adult male.

The middle-aged working female is unique because there has been no "typical" woman's career development pattern in the past (Baruch et al., 1978). Some middle-aged women may have been forced--because of economic necessity, divorce, or death of spouse--into the working world without the necessary skills for a financially and emotionally satisfying career (Baruch et al., 1978; Gould, 1978; Friedan, 1963; Melamed, 1983). Perhaps young adult workers are more idealistic than middle-aged adults. They have just begun on their jobs and have not had many disillusions or disappointments. Another possible reason for higher job satisfaction in early adulthood may be that more young adult workers are single and childless and thus feel less economic pressure.

The results of this study reflect the need for more studies which examine women's developmental patterns, both singularly, and in

comparison to those of men. Also, this research suggests that more studies focus on the middle-aged female to determine the reseasons for the significant difference in gender. Because there are very few "typical" women's paths for the nontraditional female (Baruch et al., 1983) it is suggested that the study be repeated in the future to see if the middle adult female's job satisfaction, locus of control and psychological well-being has been affected by recent social change.

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